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ROE

INUVIK

By Alex Roe

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POLARPAM

ooted deep within Kwakiutl mythol-
is the strong belief that animals are
e to change into human form and
k again. Reaching back in time that
noon, the Hunt family shared the
utiful mystery of transformation de-
ed by their traditional dances. A par-
ticularly impressive bird-human trans-
formation mask was used to illustrate
possibility and power of change.

The artist of the old days knew the
sformation, so when he drew a raven
s bird form, in his mind there was no
blem for it to change into human and
k to raven...but he never thought to
trate it," Tony explains.

He has designed more than 60 prints,
most recent being a direct approach
the animal-human transformation
me. It is the first attempt by a North-
t Coast artist to paint the progressive
sformation in a two-dimensional
ge.

he silkscreen print or paper medium
made a permanent impact on the
ter recognition and appreciation of
hwest Coast artists, and has enabled
e people to collect the art at afforda-
prices.

Depending on the design and amount
work involved, a silkscreen print by
y Hunt is valued from \$200 to \$600.



Tony thinks his responsibility as an
Indian artist is obvious. "My role was al-
ways to teach other people...designing,
carving, jewellery-making, but also the
language and dancing."

He set up the Arts of the Raven Gallery
in Victoria to provide a training centre for
young artists and a sales shop for their
finished work. At the warehouse work-
shop 12 artists work full-time year round

and there is always a waiting list of about
25 eager students. The apprentice has
the opportunity to learn not only design-
ing and carving skills but also the signifi-
cance and respect of the tradition within
the art.

"The 10 years I had with Mungo, he
showed all the different styles that were
available," says Tony. "He taught me well
enough so that now I do not have to
worry about dimensions, sizes and fig-
ures — it just comes naturally."

In the old days all the colours came
from nature — salmon roe for red and
crushed shell for the white base. Com-
temporary designers might use six to
eight different traditional colours, al-
though 90 per cent of the designs are
done in black and white.

Wood carvings, feast dishes and bas-
ketry were enhanced with painted de-
signs. The flat art adorned housefronts,
boxes and chiefs' seats, telling the story
of the culture and lifestyle of the old vil-
lage and the new.

Taking it a step further, Tony says,
"Everything you do should develop to a
higher level."

Tony Hunt is a partner in the dramatic
dance of creativity, the link of continuity
between what was and remains to be, a
unique combination of change and tradi-
tional artistry. □

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INUVIK!

by Alex Roe

On the morning of December 29, 1931, after barricading himself in his eight by 10 foot cabin on Rat River, a trapper called Johnson shot RCMP Constable Alfred King in the chest as he approached Johnson's door with a search warrant. King's two colleagues managed to rescue him and later returned with reinforcements, but again failed to rout the trapper. And when they came back for a third try, Johnson had already escaped on snowshoes into the northern landscape.

There followed an unprecedented RCMP manhunt in heavy snows and temperatures that dipped as low as minus 49 degrees C, ending some 50

days later, in a prolonged gun battle on the banks of the Eagle River — "after the smoke cleared" — as any one of a dozen accounts of the incident recites. Johnson was found quite dead, lying face down in the Eagle River mud.

And that, with a few embellishments, is the story of the "Mad Trapper of Rat River", commercialized in song, film and landmark. He was buried, an unknown, in an unmarked northern grave. But his legend lives on, making dollars for his post-humous promoters and incidentally confirming our southern notions of northern life as untamed, snowbound, isolated and generally horrific.

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In fact, we southerners are mistaken. For not 35 miles from Albert Johnson's final resting place stands present day Inuvik, man-made town in a new, oil-rich Arctic — home of the Mad Trapper Saloon and Dome Petroleum Ltd.'s business manager — by its very nature a forceful refutation of all those southern biases.

Its main road edged by clapboard storefronts and the inevitable Hudson's Bay, Inuvik, which sits on top of the spongy tundra of the Mackenzie Delta, some 200 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, could easily pass for some nameless, unremarkable prairie town. A single cement sidewalk extends the length of its Mackenzie Avenue shopping district, linking the General Hospital at one end with Slim Semmler's trading post at the other. In between one can purchase anything from postage stamps to genuine, 1950's vintage saddle oxfords. Residents park their cars diagonally on one side of the street, parallel on the other. And even

if it is paved, Mackenzie is still a dusty country road, impossibly muddy when the snows set in.

But there is similarity to any up-province prairie community ends abruptly. For Inuvik, more than most small towns, is essentially a transient community, many times more cosmopolitan than most southern townships and as enigmatic as Albert Johnson himself.

Coined "place of man" in Inuktitut, the language of the Eskimo, Inuvik evolved from a federal cabinet decision in 1953 to move Aklavik, where Delta activities had previously been centered, to a new location. Like so many settlements in the area, Aklavik was prone to flooding, and officials were concerned it would eventually sink. East III — 68 degrees 22 minutes north and 133 degrees 43 minutes west — a previously unsettled area, became the alternative.

Buildings were first erected on site in 1955 and within 10 years, Inuvik's population had grown to over 2000. At that

time, most residents were government employees and the town became regional headquarters for federal and territorial activities in education, health, social welfare and economic development.

In the early 1970's, as the oil industry conducted explorations in the Delta area, Inuvik's population swelled to 4000 and secondary industries flourished. But the boom was shortlived, brought to a halt in 1977, when the Berger Commission recommended a 10 year moratorium on Mackenzie pipeline activities. Many small businesses collapsed and in less than a year, over 500 residents moved out of the area.

Today Inuvik's population has stabilized at 3000 although oil exploration and particularly the activities of Dome Petroleum, have renewed local hopes for another boom. In anticipation the town council has recently completed plans for a community of up to 15,000.

The Northerner population

Although Inuvik guide books usually divide the local population into three cultures according to the languages they speak, they might more accurately identify residents by the amount of time they have spent in the area. "You either love it or you hate it", say many residents. And if you hate it, usually you leave in a hurry. Of course, if you love it, you stay and begin to call yourself a northerner — like Dan Holman, editor of *The Drum*, Inuvik's weekly, who comments that "all our enemies are anybody below that line", in reference to the NWT-Alberta border.

Dominating Inuvik are the Inuit and Loucheux, native cultures of the Arctic for generations. Forced to adapt to modern technology at the expense of their traditional ways, they are caught between old and new.

Introduced to contemporary man in 1576-78, when Frobisher made his expedition to the Arctic, the Inuit first began to rely on western goods in the 19th century, when American and European whaling ships visited the area in increasing numbers. At that time, the traps, guns and ammunition they traded for only confirmed their traditional nomadic existence.

Twentieth century technology has put an end to many Inuit traditions. Most of us are only aware of the remarkable differences between our own and the Eskimo way of life. But others who have studied the culture recognize that much contemporary Eskimo art, for example, is not traditional Inuit at all, but rather an Inuit rendering of what southerners believe Eskimo art should be. Hence, the



production of beautifully detailed blanket wallhangings, previously unknown to Inuit culture, and recent soapstone carvings that are far removed from more traditional Eskimo art forms.

Aware of their loss, the Inuit are today becoming effective advocates of native rights and identity. Schools provide instruction in Inuktitut, the Inuit tongue, led by teachers trained through McGill University's Northerner Education Program. Written materials like the *Inuktitut* magazine are available to interested readers. And for young people returning to the land, summer camps providing training in the old ways, are now offered by several educational centers.

The role of Dome

While its presence has undeniably accelerated northern development, Dome Petroleum is making efforts to minimize the impact of its technology of northerners.

Virtually a household word in these days of rising energy consciousness, Dome has been active in the Arctic for 20 years. It did not start drilling in the Beaufort Sea, however, until 1976, when it established operational headquarters at a tiny settlement called Tuktoyaktuk, about 90 miles northeast of Inuvik, on the Arctic Ocean. Tuk was chosen because of its summertime accessibility to the Beaufort and naturally, Inuvik, with its international airport and business and government offices, became the company's logistics base.

Some 130 employees were installed initially on Tuk's treeless polar tundra, to service Dome's drill ship fleet. In 1980, the camp was expanded to accommodate 360 workers, over a 30 acre area, in modular units specifically designed for

the purpose by ATCO, a Calgary-based mobile unit manufacturer. Today, it renowned across the north for its extensive sports facilities, a library, several lounges, theatres, even a jacuzzi, whirlpool and first class cuisine. It is a model environment in an experimental setting, using some innovative management techniques.

According to Noel Broom, Dome's northern business manager, Tuk employees work 12-hour days, two weeks on, two weeks off. At the completion of their shift, they are transported to Inuvik and Edmonton via Dome's own Boeing 747. Employees are not allowed to go into town of Tuk at all. Native northerners leave their posts during the hunting and trapping seasons, as long as they forewarn their supervisors. Dome adopted the policy when it was discovered that hunt-struck employees were often too shy to come back after season and needed some reassurance they would be welcome.

In the same spirit, Dome has become involved in local education programs as a means of increasing its employment pool. During the idle winter months has opened its Tuk Camp as an educational center. Nicknamed Tuk Tec, local residents, the centre provides limited apprenticeship courses, leading to employment with Dome and an opportunity to become a skilled tradesman with journeyman papers.

Business opportunities

Dome has had its greatest impact, however, on northern business. By the end of 1981 alone, according to Broom, the company will have spent some \$5.5 million on its northern program — between \$5.5 million and \$6 million in wages and a staggering \$24 million in business expenditures.

Inadvertently, its management policies have stimulated such tourist operations as Dave Burt's Fireweed Studio. A combined northern arts gallery and presentation, Fireweed provides informal evening introductions to the customs and folklore of the north. They were designed expressly for tourists and Inuvik newcomers, among them Dome managers. Tuk is one of many tour operators in the area, spawned by an evolving tourism trade. During the 1970's, tourist flights have shot up from virtually zero to 4000, thanks in part to the newly opened Dempster Highway, which has attracted diverse groups to make the trip.

However, local outfits like Al Fries' consulting firm are the most con-

s beneficiaries of Dome's presence. A longtime Inuvik resident who came here years ago — "We were only going to stay for a short time" — Pluim has been in business since he arrived. He is currently president of the Inuvik and area Chamber of Commerce, with a membership of 45 the "most active chamber in the Northwest Territories". Since 1976 he has worked as Dome's logistics coordinator, ensuring that employees, machinery and supplies make it on schedule to the Tuk Camp. His success enabled him to invest over \$2 million during the past two years in his second business, a contracting firm, and to plan

on opening a third, a retail store specializing in safety clothing.

"People don't realize what's going on in the north. A lot of us here have made predictions and they've been exceeded already," says Pluim.

Pluim believes that Inuvik could well become the hub for major development in the area in the next three years — development to the tune of \$10 billion or better. But he bemoans the "here today, gone tomorrow" image Inuvik's name still provokes in southern business circles, an image fostered by "fast buck operators" who periodically sweep into town.

"We want to attract business by our presentation as solid, honest businessmen, capable of doing a good job."

And solid they must be. And persistent. For while opportunity abounds in Inuvik, what entrepreneurs lack in competition is matched by start-up costs. Lettuce costs \$1.40 a pound here, milk around \$2 a litre. Now consider the freight costs of shipping merchandise into this area.

The new Northerner

Isolation, obviously, has played a major role in fashioning Inuvik, overriding the effects of Dome and southern technology and a host of other differences between north and south. But more than isolation, climate has determined the settlement's growth, as it once determined the lifestyle, the customs, even the very philosophical foundations of the Arctic's earliest residents, 10,000 years ago.

We southerners tend to underestimate how dramatically climate affects our daily lives. But Inuvites have only to catch a glimpse of their utilidor to be reminded. A pipeline system built above ground when it was impossible to penetrate the tundra's permafrost layer, the Utilidor, encased in a continuous aluminum box, transports the town's heat, hot water and sewage. It spreads like octopus tentacles throughout the community — a case of southern technology adapting to northern climate.

Southern emigrants to Inuvik seem to adapt in much the same way, evolving a new identity in the process. The result is a new breed of northerner — stronger, better informed, less chauvinistic, more politically astute than his or her southern counterpart.

Man-made town with no past, Inuvik, from all accounts, has instead a vast future as a major force in shaping Canada.

"It's a developing kind of place," says Dome's Noel Broom, and if the glowing reports of his company are right, in the next 10 years the Mackenzie Delta area could blossom into an Alberta of the north, with the same potential for wealth and political clout.

Meanwhile its sense of destiny, tempered by an abiding suspicion of southern insensitivity and greed, is the community's single most defining characteristic, reflected in the optimism of its business population and the assertive stance of its community groups. □

We all have different points of view



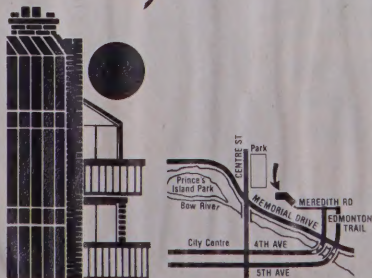
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